

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of the present application is respectfully requested.

Claims 1, 16, and 18 have been amended by way of the present amendment. Claims 1-5 and 16-18 remain active in the application.

In the outstanding Office Action, Claims 1-5 and 16-18 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as anticipated by or, in the alternative, under 35 U. S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over the IPDL JPO Machine Translation for JP 08-041683 A. Moreover, the product-by-process limitations of Claims 1-5 and 16-18 (specifically, the limitations “hydrophilized by one of sulfonation, gaseous fluorine treatment, and vinyl monomer grafting” and “produced by a wet process”), were not given patentable weight by the Examiner.

In order to more clearly distinguish the current invention over the prior art, independent Claims 1, 16, and 18 have been amended to explicitly recite that the collector and alkaline secondary battery described include a nonwoven fabric that has been hydrophilized and *possesses a negative electrical charge*. Basis for these amendments can be found at least at page 4, lines 11-20. In particular, the specification discloses:

“The nonwoven fabric hydrophilized by the above treatment [one of sulfonation, gaseous fluorine treatment and vinyl monomer grafting] has a uniform and fine negative charge over the entire region. In this collector, the plated nickel film is tightly bonded to the nonwoven fabric, improving conductivity.”

It is thus noted that the amended claims merely explicitly describe a structural feature (negative charge) which is inherent in hydrophilized fibers, and so have not been narrowed in scope.

Applicants respectfully submit that the claims, as amended structurally, distinguish the current invention over the cited prior art.

The reference cited by the Examiner, IPDL JPO Machine Translation for JP 08-041683A, describes a battery comprising a collector including a nonwoven fabric containing

crimped fibers laminated to an open-cell synthetic resin sheet, and further discloses that the crimped fibers can be made of olefins such as polyethylene and polypropylene (see paragraph 15 of the Machine Translation).

However, olefin fibers are hydrophobic as a result of their nonpolar nature. As a result, they preclude the permeation of a plating solution and exhibit poor adhesiveness (Specification at page 8, lines 30-32). Moreover, the cited reference does not disclose that the materials have been hydrophilized by sulfonation, gaseous fluorine treatment, or vinyl monomer grafting and so do not possess a negative or positive charge as claimed by the Applicants.

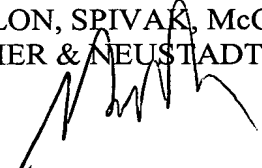
In contrast, a nonwoven fabric hydrophilized by any one of the above treatments will have a uniform and fine *negative charge* over the entire region of fabric, so that the plated nickel film of the collector will be tightly bonded to the nonwoven fabric, improving conductivity and preventing the scaling-off typically experienced over time with existing alkaline battery technology (Specification at page 4, lines 11-20). As such, the products recited in Claims 1-5 and 16-18 are *structurally* different from those disclosed in the cited reference (in that the nonwoven fabric has a negative charge). These claims are thus patentably distinguishable over the cited prior art.

As the cited reference does not teach, either explicitly or inherently, all the claim limitations contained within the present invention, the claims, as amended by the foregoing amendment, are therefore believed to define over the cited reference and to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request the withdrawal of the rejection under 35 U.S.C. § 102 and 35 U.S.C. § 103.

Applicants therefore believe that the present application is in condition for allowance,
and respectfully solicit an early notice of allowability.

Respectfully submitted,

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